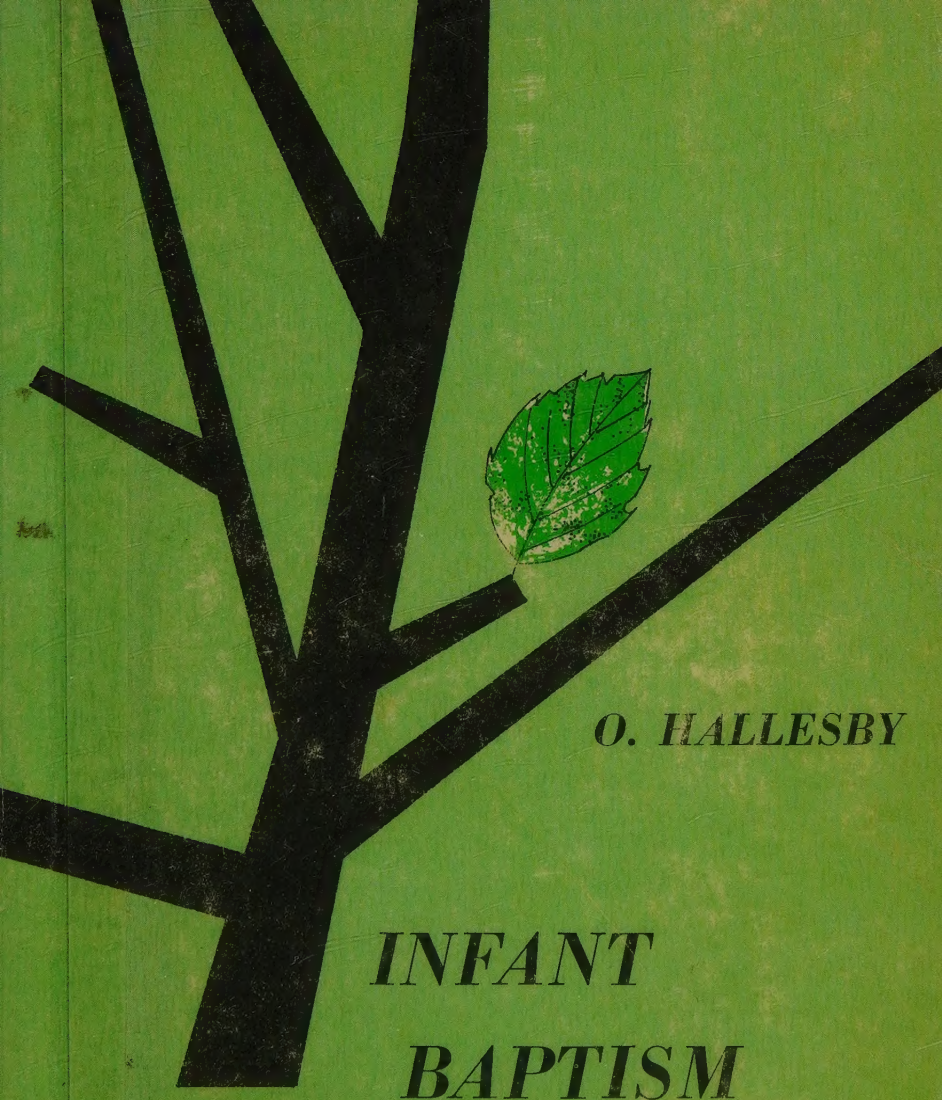

O. HALLESBY

INFANT BAPTISM AND ADULT CONVERSION

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Infant Baptism and Adult Conversion

INFANT BAPTISM
AND
ADULT CONVERSION

By

O. HALLESBY

Translated from the Norwegian by

CLARENCE J. CARLSEN

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INFANT BAPTISM AND ADULT CONVERSION

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Introduction

THE relation between regeneration in Baptism on the one hand and awakening and conversion on the other is a problem which has produced great difficulties through the history of the church. This comes most clearly to light in the preaching. Some preaching keeps baptismal grace clearly in view and speaks of it both often and fervently. But it seldom or never mentions awakening and conversion. It does not reject awakening and conversion. But it is unable to find an organic place for them in connection with baptismal grace.

Other preaching speaks clearly of awakening and conversion. But it never mentions Baptism, not because it rejects the regenerative effect of Baptism, but because it is unable to provide a place for Baptism in connection with awakening and conversion.

One who is somewhat well informed will know how much of both these kinds of preaching there is in our day. And both will work harm by suppressing such important phases of the Gospel's saving truth. It will be of great importance both for preaching and for the care of souls to have placed awakening and conversion in the right relation to baptismal grace. It will be of importance both in dealing with the God-fearing child that has remained in the grace of Baptism, and with the backslider who is awakened and led to conversion.

I

The Baptismal Gift of Salvation

OUR inquiry concerns itself with the relation between regeneration in Infant Baptism on the one hand and awakening and conversion on the other. Naturally, then, we take as our starting-point the baptism of the child. But before we proceed to speak about Infant Baptism, we must very briefly ascertain what the Scriptures tell us about Baptism and the gift of salvation which the Lord has joined to it.

We begin, therefore, with the Lord's words of institution (Matt. 28:19-20): "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you."

These words show us, in the first place, that the Lord here speaks of a *new* Baptism, different from the baptism of John, with which he himself had been baptized, and which he made use of in his early ministry (John 3:22 and 4:2). The baptism of John was, he himself says, a symbolic act only, containing no gift of salvation. "I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire" (Matt. 3:11). Now after his resurrection Jesus instituted the Baptism which John had foretold, the Baptism by means of which he gives what the baptism of John only symbolized.

Thus, too, the apostles understood this command of Jesus. They understood the Baptism he speaks of here as a Baptism different from the baptism of John.

This follows most clearly from the account in Acts 19:1-5. Paul meets some of the disciples of John in Ephesus and asks them if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed. They answer: "Nay, we did not so much as hear that the Holy Spirit was given." Into what then were ye baptized, asks Paul. They reply: "Into John's baptism." And then Paul baptized them into the name of the Lord Jesus.

In the second place, these words of Jesus show us that Baptism is the means whereby men are made disciples of Jesus. And by disciples of the Messiah

are meant men who are partakers in and recipients of the Messiah's gift of salvation. And John had already prophesied that the Messiah's one great gift of salvation is the Spirit. "He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire." In the words of the Great Commission the Lord thus ordains the act of Baptism as the outward means whereby men become partakers of the Messianic salvation.

In the third place, the expression, "to baptize into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," shows that the gift of salvation which is joined to the act of Baptism is participation in the complete revelation of salvation as achieved in our world by the triune God. This means, then, that in Baptism man becomes a partaker of all the saving grace which God has put into the world.

Have we now understood these words of Jesus aright by interpreting them in this way?

We can test this most readily by ascertaining how the apostles understood the baptismal command of Jesus. They were supplied by the Lord with divine grace to understand him rightly and to interpret his utterances correctly in all points, consequently also these words of his concerning Baptism.

Let us now see how the apostles express themselves concerning the gift of salvation which is connected with the outward Baptism with water.

In this brief survey we shall not examine all the

apostolic sayings concerning Baptism; we shall consider only the most distinctive ones.

Let us notice how the New Testament authors with one accord connect the gift of the *forgiveness of sins* with Baptism. Peter speaks thus: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto *the remission of your sins*" (Acts 2:38). "Arise, and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins,*" Ananias tells Paul (Acts 22:16). And in Hebrews 10:22 it says: "Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our *hearts sprinkled* from an evil conscience: and having our *body washed* with pure water." Here Baptism is not expressly mentioned; but that the author has Baptism in mind is perfectly apparent, because the church possessed no other act whereby the body was washed with pure water. And the author says that at the same time as the body was washed with pure water the heart was sprinkled from an evil conscience, namely through the remission of the guilt of sin.

Let us next observe how the New Testament writers *join the gift of the Holy Spirit to Baptism.* Peter says: "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and *ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). And Paul says: "In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). True enough, some

have understood these words of Paul as referring to a baptism of the Spirit, having nothing in common with the Baptism with water. But the expression here does not allow such an interpretation. It says: baptized in one Spirit *into one body*. Here Paul has reference to the act of God whereby we become members of the body of Christ, and that is, of course, *regeneration*. And Paul joins regeneration to the Baptism with water; we read (Titus 3:5): "not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through *the washing of regeneration* and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

In this instance, too, some have thought that the passage does not refer to the washing of Baptism. The expression "baptism," like the expression "washing of water with the word" (Eph. 5:26), they have taken to be a figurative expression. But this is in direct opposition to all sound methods of interpretation. The churches which received these epistles had only one washing. And when the author uses this term with the definite article, *the* washing, no reader could think of anything else but the washing of Baptism. And if the author had had another washing in mind, he would have had to indicate it.

Finally, we shall notice Paul's statement that *through Baptism we become united with Christ* (Rom. 6:4-5; Col. 2:12). And if Christ was made unto us wisdom,

righteousness, and redemption, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 1:30, then it is clear that Baptism, by uniting us with Christ, makes us partakers of the full salvation; so a person cannot be given more than what is given him in Baptism.

Thus we have proved, then, that our understanding of the words of institution of Jesus is right.

II

Baptism as Infant Baptism

MOST of the difficulties concerning the question of Baptism are associated with Infant Baptism. And because I take it for granted that you, my young friends, either already have contended or in the future will have to contend with these difficulties, I desire to treat of them here, in order that we may have a solid Scriptural foundation upon which to stand as we proceed to speak of regeneration in Infant Baptism. Let us deal with the arguments against Infant Baptism in the following order:

1. The history of the earliest church furnishes, it is maintained, conclusive proof that the baptizing of infants is a human ordinance, which arose long after the death of the apostles and which came about because the church already at that time was begin-

ning to grow worldly. And for that reason, also, it is contended, Infant Baptism was *enjoined* upon the whole church when the union between church and state took place in 325 A.D.

2. There is no warrant in Holy Writ for baptizing children. Not one command to baptize children can be found in all Scripture. Furthermore, it is never related in Scripture that children were baptized. True enough, it says that upon several occasions some were baptized with their whole household (Acts 16: 33; 1 Cor. 1:16). But nothing is said to indicate that there were children in these households. Of course, some Jewish families may have been childless. But even though there were children, yet there is nothing which says that they were *little* children.

3. Not only is it true that the Scriptures say nothing about the baptism of children but there are, on the contrary, passages which show clearly that children should not be baptized, it is maintained. Jesus did not baptize the little children which the mothers brought to him. He did, however, take them in his arms and lay his hands upon them and bless them (Mark 10:13-16).

4. The Scriptures name *requirements* for Baptism. "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you," says Peter (Acts 2:38). "He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved," says Mark 16:6. But little children

cannot fulfill these conditions. For that reason the baptism of children should be delayed until they grow old enough to repent and believe.

5. Neither do children need Baptism in that age, some say. They have not as yet committed any sins and they are still so sweet and innocent. Furthermore, Jesus says himself that the kingdom of God belongs to them (Mark 10:14).

*

1. The earliest history of Baptism is not such a simple historical question as the opponents of Infant Baptism seem to think. The baptism of children is presupposed and spoken of by the Church Fathers very soon after the death of John the Apostle. We note that the two types of baptismal practice run parallel until about the year 250 A.D. At this time the practice which baptized both adults and children emerges victorious. This is a very difficult historical problem. Both of these opposite methods of procedure in baptizing could not have originated with the apostles. Consequently, one of them has departed from the apostolic practice. This is all the more remarkable when we think of the authority the apostles had in the churches. Which is now the original apostolic practice, and which a departure?

As an answer to these difficult questions, I shall adduce the following:

In the first place: Those Church Fathers who defend the Baptism of children emphasize explicitly that Infant Baptism was practiced by the apostles. And the Fathers who reject Infant Baptism never deny this assertion. They do not attack Infant Baptism on historical grounds, but for intellectual reasons. "Why does the innocent age hasten to the washing of Baptism?" says Tertullian.

In the second place: When the administration of Baptism to children was attacked, it was because of a view of Baptism which early had crept into the church, namely, that it was impossible for one who had been baptized and then had fallen away from God to be converted again. As a result of this view, it was very common to postpone Baptism as long as possible, even to the death-bed, in order to guard oneself in the best possible way against falling away after being baptized. But that makes it clear why they did not want to baptize little children. Thus clear light is thrown upon the struggle against Infant Baptism in earliest times.

2. Scripture does not enjoin the Baptism of children; neither does it tell of children being baptized. That is true. But when men say that they reject Infant Baptism for this reason, they are not absolutely truthful. In that case the same people would have to reject other things also. Women's participation in the

Lord's Supper is nowhere commanded in the Scriptures. Neither is it related anywhere that women partook of the Sacrament of the Altar. If the opponents of Infant Baptism who thus feel themselves bound by the letter of Scripture were serious and sincere, they would also certainly be compelled to forbid women to go to the Table of the Lord.

But as far as I know, no one takes such a pedantic and unspiritual attitude as that when it pertains to the administration of the Lord's Supper. That being the case, we must have the right to ask: Why is it done when it pertains to the administration of Baptism? No, *this* is not *the reason* for rejecting the Baptism of children. It is only a *subterfuge* to which they resort for concealment.

In regard to the kernel of the matter itself, the warrant for Infant Baptism in the Scriptures, I will say: Christ has instituted neither *Adult* Baptism nor *Infant* Baptism. He has instituted *Baptism.* That is: He has once for all ordained by his creative Word what the saving effect of Baptism shall be and what gift of salvation shall accompany the act as often as it is administered. On the other hand, Jesus has not said when and where the act should be administered and who should be baptized. That he has left to his church to decide under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

Exactly the same is the case with the Lord's Sup-

per. He instituted it and ordained once for all what gift of salvation was to accompany this act. On the other hand, he said nothing about who should go to the Supper.

From the baptismal command we see very clearly that Baptism and the Word are the only means by which men can be made disciples of Jesus. Those who do not become disciples by these means cannot, on the whole, become disciples.* Therefore children also must become disciples of Jesus by these means if they, on the whole, may as children become disciples of Jesus.

3. But, it is argued, Jesus did not baptize the little children which the parents brought to him. He took them in his arms and laid his hands upon them and blessed them. "That is what I do with my little children," a Baptist once said to me when we were discussing this. "Indeed," said I, "doing that, and doing it often, too, certainly does not hurt your children. But I presume you realize that Jesus has never enjoined this upon you as a means of salvation. On the contrary, he has expressly commanded you to make disciples of *all* by *baptizing* and teaching them."

*At this point the tormenting question arises for many: What becomes of those children who die unbaptized? We must answer this the way the ancients did: God has bound *us* to the means of grace. He himself is *not* bound to them. He *can*, therefore, save these little children by means unknown to us. That he *wills* it is evident from this, that it is not his will that one of these little ones should perish (Matt. 18:14).

The reason that Jesus did not baptize the little ones, but merely took them in his arms and blessed them, is exceedingly simple. It was because he had not as yet instituted Christian Baptism in the name of the triune God. Therefore he did not baptize adults, either, who came to him.

4. But do children need the gift of Baptism?

Here, assuredly, we touch upon the fundamental difficulty in the question of Baptism. Here is where intellectual doubt concerning Infant Baptism generally originates. Children are so sweet and innocent. And of course they have not, as yet, been able to *commit* any sin. And then, too, Scripture says that they belong to the kingdom of God.

No, Scripture does not say that. The statement of Jesus in Mark 10:14 does not say that by any means. He says that the kingdom of God belongs to them! not that the little ones belong to the kingdom of God. The disciples of Jesus thought that the kingdom of God was not intended for little children. Therefore they sought to prevent the parents from occupying Jesus' time with these little ones. Then Jesus became angry and said that the kingdom of God is intended for them.

"Is this a correct interpretation of these words of Jesus?" some ask. Yes, it is. That Jesus with these words never did want to say that children by virtue

of their natural birth belong to the kingdom of God, every one should know who has read Jesus' words to Nicodemus: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). Therefore every individual, also little children, must be born anew in order to enter into the kingdom of God.

We find the same thought also in Paul's writings (Eph. 2:3): "We are all by nature children of wrath." "By nature"—that means: Our condition at birth is such that we are subject to the wrath of God which rests upon our whole fallen race. It is correct enough to say: "The infant has not, as yet, *committed* any sin." But we cannot be born into this sinful race without bearing our share of the race's guilt.

5. But are children capable of receiving the gift of Baptism?

Scripture names repentance and faith as the conditions upon which Baptism can have any saving effect upon the one who is baptized. But a child certainly cannot repent and believe. Therefore Baptism must be postponed until the child is old enough to be able to repent and believe.

So they say, and so they do. And, of course, it appears logically unassailable. There is only this little hitch in it: the plain words of Jesus are diametrically opposed to it. The ordinance of Jesus has been turned upside down completely. He says that we adults must

repent and *become as little children* in order to enter into the kingdom of God (Matt. 18:3). Furthermore, he even says that whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein (Mark 10:15). But the opponents of Infant Baptism say that the children must become like us adults; then they, too, will be permitted to enter into the kingdom of God.

A few still argue: "Yes, but were the children to which Jesus had reference *so* small that they could not repent and believe?" The answer to this objection is: The record says that they *brought (carried)* them to Jesus. They were at least that small. And the Greek expression in Luke 18:15, *brephos,* really means fetus and is used in that sense, for instance, in Luke 1:41. But it is also used of infants and very small children.

Thus it has become clear to us that Jesus looks upon children, not only as being capable of receiving the gift of the kingdom of God, but so receptive, even, that they are examples of receptivity for us adults.

*

The view of Baptism and of the child which rejects Infant Baptism is very deeply rooted. It is not merely a misunderstanding of Baptism and of the child; it goes much deeper than that. Fundamentally it is a misunderstanding of the very truth concerning *sin and grace.*

The opponents of Infant Baptism have not been able to hold fast to the statements of Scripture regarding man's total moral impotence as a result of the fall in sin. It comes to light most clearly in their preaching of repentance. It is preached thus: "Man must by repentance tear himself loose from his former sins and cease to love sin." If the sinner is not able to accomplish this, the surrender is not a wholehearted one, it is said.

Their preaching of faith shows the same thing. Man, by his faith, must draw grace unto himself. Grace is, indeed, free. That is, he who seeks it can get it. Faith is the hand by means of which the sinner reaches out for and appropriates grace.

If repentance and faith are understood in this way, it is clear that the little child can have neither of them. The child cannot put forth any of the soul-exertion which, according to this conception, is absolutely necessary in order that the grace of God may be transferred to the heart of the sinner.

In Scripture this is presented in an entirely different light.

Man is lost because of sin. He possesses no power to tear himself loose from his old sins, still less to cease loving sin. Scripture tells us, moreover, that Christ came to release the *captives*. It tells us, likewise, that the mind of the flesh is enmity against God,

and "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" until it is born of God.

Repentance, therefore, does not consist in this, that man is able by the power of his own will to tear himself loose from his former sins; neither in this, that man is able to compel himself to hate sin and to love God. No, repentance consists in this, that the sinner, convicted by the Holy Spirit of his sins, submits to this conviction and confesses that he is bound by the chains of sin and that he loves sin and not God.

Faith is not a soul-exertion or a condition of the soul which makes us worthy to receive the grace of God. Neither is it a power by means of which we should draw unto ourselves the grace of God.

That is not necessary, because grace is free. Not only in the sense that all may *seek* it. It is as free as the air which envelopes us on every hand and forces itself in upon us as soon as it secures the least access. Such is the grace of God in Christ.

The propitiation which Christ made by his life and death he made as the representative of and the substitute for the race. Therefore this propitiation is the property of the race. The covenant which God made in the death of Christ consists in this, that he takes upon himself to impart to each member of the race the salvation which through Christ belongs to the race. See 2 Cor. 5:18-19, where Paul mentions "the word of "reconciliation" as a part of the dispensation

of salvation which God perfected in and by the death of Christ.

As a consequence of this covenant, God provides that grace searches for the individual sinner. It is not the sinner, therefore, who first seeks grace. No, grace has already found the sinner the moment the sinner begins to seek grace.

Because grace searches for the sinner long before the sinner thinks of grace, Baptism becomes Infant Baptism. Grace searches for man as soon as he is born. The little child *shall,* according to God's covenant, receive its part of the finished salvation, which it has a right to because it is born into the race which Jesus has redeemed. The child *can* receive a part in this salvation, Jesus says. It is to that extent receptive that it is an example for us adults in receiving the kingdom of God.

How, then, does the child receive the kingdom of God?

It, of course, has no idea of what is taking place in the moment of Baptism. It cannot think, consequently neither repent nor believe as we adults do. But it can do something that we adults first learn through repentance and faith: It remains passive, not opposing the grace of God. Jesus gains unimpeded access to this little human life with all his grace and gifts.

Now Jesus tells us adults that if we do not receive

the kingdom of God "as a little child," we shall never enter therein. But how shall we adults get to the point where we, as the child, become submissive and do not hinder Jesus from entering with all his salvation? Of a truth, says Jesus, *through repentance* we become as children (Matt. 18:3).

Here we see, consequently, what purpose repentance should serve us adults. It is to remove the opposition by means of which we have prevented Jesus from coming to us with all his grace. Repentance and faith in the adult consist, therefore, simply in this, that the adult realizes and acknowledges his helplessness and decides to surrender himself unconditionally to the Savior. For Jesus needs *help* neither from the little child nor from the adult. All he needs is *access.*

Thus we have seen that administration of Baptism as Infant Baptism is precisely an expression of how free and unmerited is the grace of God.

This throws light upon the peculiar historical fact, that it is the *Reformed* Church which has had difficulties with Infant Baptism. The Lutheran Church has had no difficulties, except such as have been injected into it from the Reformed Church through the influence of individuals here and there. That the Lutheran Church has, without difficulty, retained Baptism as Infant Baptism is precisely because it has had such a clear view of human depravity and the unmerited gift of God's salvation.

III

The Unconscious Life

AFTER this exposition of the baptismal gift of salvation and the applicability of Baptism to children, we now turn to the question of *the effect of Baptism in the child.*

Theoretically, the question can be answered plainly enough. Through Baptism the child is grafted into a living connection with Christ and receives thereby a part in the full salvation: forgiveness of sins, sonship, and the new life through the Holy Spirit. But it is more difficult to give a *practical* reply to this question. What is it that takes place within the child in the moment of Baptism?

What is done *to* the child is not so difficult to determine, because that is precisely the same as what is done to the adult who is baptized. The child is de-

livered from its guilt by becoming a partaker in the atonement of Jesus Christ. Thereby it is raised to the estate of sonship.

What is done within the child is, on the contrary, more difficult to determine. True enough, we can forthwith determine this as follows: The Holy Spirit accomplishes regeneration in the little one. But if we ask: What occurs in the child, what is it that psychologically has taken place in this little life, we straightway realize the difficulty.

Then, too, it is a question whether we are not at this point approaching the mysterious realm into which the human mind cannot tread and where we simply in holy awe should take off our shoes. We know, of course, that regeneration both with adults and infants is the great life mystery, which no human mind is able to think through or explain. As we proceed to our investigation of this matter, we do not intend to undertake anything so unreasonable as to explain the inexplicable. But we do wish to consider everything that we *can* understand, and analyze it as far as we are able.

*

When we set out to investigate the effect of Baptism in the infant, we encounter the difficulty that the child has only *unconscious life*. For we are as yet little acquainted with the nature and the laws of this

life. But we shall now try to gather the knowledge we have of the unconscious life and thereby elucidate the relation between the unconscious and the conscious life.

In the first place, then, we shall record the simple truth that every normally developed human life consists of these two kinds of life, the conscious and the unconscious. And the relation between these we may express by a mathematical figure, thus: They are to each other as two concentric circles, two circles with the same center but of different sizes. The *greater* of these circles is the unconscious life. It may possibly be that many will be surprised on hearing this. It is also in itself remarkable that the life of a human being, which is, of course, a personal life, really moves more in the realm of the unconscious than in that of the conscious. But it is not difficult to show that this is actually so.

In the first place, we lived at least two years in the unconscious life before the conscious life began to awaken. Most people lose consciousness some time before the unconscious life is extinguished in death. With some this may take several minutes; with others, several hours, days, or weeks.

In the second place, we may refer to sleep. Sleep temporarily renders our conscious life extinct, so that only the unconscious functions. It is highly remarkable that we spend such a large part of our brief life-

time in sleep. When we take into account that the child sleeps so much during the first two years and that the same usually repeats itself in old age, we can no doubt say that every human being sleeps away on an average one third of his lifetime.

In the third place, we can make reference to the fact that also in the awakened state we experience vastly more than the little we apprehend in our consciousness to such an extent that we can say to ourselves, "Now I experienced it." Thus we see every moment much more than we are conscious of having seen or, as we say, "paid attention to." Likewise our ears catch many more sounds every moment than we take notice of. In the midst of the most alert state, our thoughts take a vacation—as, for instance, during meetings. We discover suddenly that we have been absent in the spirit for a while. Reference can be made likewise to the purely automatic organic functions within the body, digestion, for instance. We sit at the table and eat and do not for a moment think of how we masticate or how we digest our food. Furthermore, digestion is best accomplished when we do not think of it. Those people who begin to worry too much about their digestion generally develop indigestion.

Just this little investigation reveals to us that we all, every moment of our life, experience much more

than we can consciously grasp and hold up before ourselves and account for. My conscious life is, therefore, only a small portion of the life which I live every moment.

*

The unconscious life-circle is, meanwhile, not only the greater. It is also first. Our conscious life begins at the age of two to grow forth out of the unconscious. This tells us a little about the dependency of the conscious life upon the unconscious. The unconscious is, so to speak, the root from which the conscious grows, to which it is connected all the way, and upon which it must forever depend for support.

This is elucidated exceptionally well by sleep. The conscious life is to such a degree dependent upon the unconscious that we must spend almost a third part of every twenty-four hours in the unconscious state. That is, the conscious life must at regular intervals immerse itself into the depths of the unconscious life. Therefrom it returns new and fresh, as our bodies do after a bath.

How dependent our conscious life is upon the unconscious is brought out still more clearly by the fact that sleep strengthens us most when it is deep, that is, when it has rendered the conscious life completely extinct. As long as we are sunk in torpor and receive semiconscious impressions from without and work

them over in our dreams, so long do we not sleep and rest really well.

The dependency of the conscious life upon the unconscious we see most clearly from the fact that the conscious life simply cannot exist without receiving sufficient and regular sleep. In fact, we see that people who for one reason or another do not receive enough sleep for a long period of time, lose the ability to live the conscious life and enter into the darkness of insanity.

The unconscious part of our life is now termed *subconsciousness.* It has to an exceptional degree attracted to itself the attention of our day and is studied energetically and thoroughly by present-day students of psychology. There is scarcely a subject being studied with such interest in our time as the subconscious life.

We Christians should be especially thankful for this study. It will assuredly throw light upon many phases of Christian soul-life, and precisely on the most obscure phases of the Christian's soul-life, namely, those which are not directly subject to the control of consciousness and will. Above all, this study will certainly help us to understand more easily the soul-life of the child, which moves to such an essential degree in the subconscious right up to the moment when it is grown and fully developed. We can without doubt say that the conscious life of the child is in the process

of awakening all the way from the age of two up through all the years of childhood until it is fully grown. The real dividing line between child and adult is, therefore, this, that the conscious life of the adult has attained its normal relationship to the subconscious.

*

Our life with God also consists of *two circles,* the conscious and the unconscious. Here, too, the unconscious is the *greater.* Our life with God includes every moment much more than we can perceive with our minds and comprehend in our emotions.

Life with God is an organism which functions uninterruptedly as long as a person possesses this life. It functions unceasingly also when the conscious life is not functioning, thus *during sleep,* and when the conscious life is occupied with other things than thinking of the God-life, for instance *during work.*

It is essential for us to be clear upon this phase of the God-life. It will free us from much unnecessary fear and inward unrest, and it will give our God-life the inward rest and balance which it needs in order to grow.

Especially in the first period of his Christian life, we are inclined to think that life with God consists only in the *thoughts* we have about God together with the *emotions* which attend these thoughts. For that

reason we are during this period so afraid of all that leads us away from thinking about God. It is even easy to fear and shun work since it hinders us from thinking about God.

Now this leads to an unnatural and forced God-life, a trait which we find also in older Christians within those Christian groups which have little or no vision of the unconscious side of the Christian life. They are especially tempted to force, by artificial means, the emotional life of the Christian up to an unnatural height.

If, on the other hand, we can come to see that the God-life is a life which lives and grows uninterruptedly, also when cognition, feeling, and will are otherwise occupied, then we will get the natural rest and repose in our soul-life which is so indispensable to the sound growth of the God-life. Then we will go to our daily work with joy and gratitude, even if it prevents us from thinking unceasingly about God. We will gradually learn to thank God especially for work because it is such a natural and simple means of keeping our hearts and our thoughts from sinning.

Many believers complain that they have so much to do that it is difficult for them to care for their life in God. For me the opposite is the case. My vacations are as a rule the weakest seasons for my spiritual life. Never is the temptation to rest from the battle against

my sins greater. My spiritual life fares best when I am at my regular work.

Jesus expressed himself once on this unconscious side of the God-life: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, *he knoweth not how.* The earth beareth fruit *of herself;* first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mark 4:26-28).

Of herself the earth beareth fruit, Jesus says. Of itself life in God grows, and not because I think about it. With my will I am only to give it place in my thoughts and provide it with the nourishment which it needs and which I can provide for it through the means of grace.

In this connection I shall mention a condition which is one of the most painful here in our world. I am thinking of the believers who become insane. Of course, in and of itself this is a grievous matter. But what often becomes the hardest for those concerned is that the insane one behaves in such a way that they must believe he has fallen away from God. Thus these who before becoming insane were warm-hearted believers often begin to curse or speak wantonly and unchastely. Or, as is often seen in the case of old people, when hardening of the arteries goes to the brain, they may become so ugly and contrary, even malicious, that those near to them must believe that

they have fallen away from God in their old age. The worst phase appears when these insane people commit suicide. Many people think that no hope remains because suicide leads directly to eternal perdition.

This conception rests, meanwhile, upon a complete misunderstanding of insanity. It is not recognized that the insane one is not responsible for his words and acts because he has lost the control over his life which consciousness and will exercise. Then the evil which is in every human soul gains unhindered permission to find expression in word and in deed.

Even before becoming insane, the one concerned carried within him all this hideousness and wickedness. But then it was subjugated daily and kept under control by the holy consciousness and will of the new man.

In this connection it is of great value to know the relation between the conscious and the unconscious life. We saw above that the God-life lives its life uninterruptedly also when the conscious life is rendered extinct, during sleep, for instance. Thus the God-life remains uninjured and continues to live also when the believer's conscious life is extinguished by insanity. A believer, therefore, who becomes insane is not more responsible for what he does then than he is responsible for what he does and says in sleep.

As comfort and consolation to those whose believ-

ing relatives or friends become insane, still another thing may be mentioned. Just as impossible as it is for a believer to fall away from God while sleeping, so impossible is it for a believer to fall away from God as long as he is insane. The believers who become incurably insane are, therefore, already eternally saved and forever beyond all danger of falling away.

This is the comforting ray of light which gives solace in the midst of insanity's terrible darkness.

It should be superfluous, but permit me, nevertheless, for safety's sake, to remind you that I wish by no means to defend suicide with these thoughts. What I have said here does not apply to all who take their own life, but to the insane only. Not, furthermore, to all insane people either, but only to such insane people as were believers when they went insane.

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Also in the life with God the unconscious life is the first to function. God brings about by supernatural means a living connection with the unconscious part of our person. Before the conscious life of the child awakens, God touches its unconscious life with his lifegiving Spirit. He takes our life's finest and deepest roots and plants them into God's own lifeground, so our unconscious life from that moment receives nourishment and the impetus of life from God himself.

And that is what happens to the infant *in Baptism.* The little slip of humanity is thereby put into living relationship with God. It receives life with God. Jesus illustrated this living relationship on one occasion in the beautiful parable of the vine and the branches. It is through Baptism that the little one is grafted into Christ. And no matter how small the branch may be, it has, nevertheless, the same life as the trunk.

At the first birth the child was brought into living relationship with the whole sinful race and thereby with the author and captain of sin, the devil. The child is not conscious of this living connection, which is, nevertheless, just as real and just as active. The child's early personal life is filled with and molded by this sinful life content.

It is this inherited sinful life that God meets by regenerating the child, that is, giving it relationship with a life of an entirely different kind, with the good life, with God's own life. The evil life is not to be permitted to work alone in the child. Now the little one receives, because it is a member of the race which Christ has redeemed, in the moment of rebirth, its part of the salvation which, according to the covenant of God, is given to and transferred into every human being which does not refuse to accept his portion of salvation.

The child *cannot* as yet deny the grace of God access. Therefore God can, *unhindered,* give the infant a part in the finished salvation. Through Baptism the child is grafted into Christ, and thus it gains access to receive the full salvation which is included in the person of Christ. But for the time being it can neither apply nor make use of all the life and vitality with which it has become connected. The living relationship takes place, for the time being, only in the unconscious life. For the child has as yet only this life.

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Now, if we are to get any idea of what is taking place during this time in the soul-life of the child, we must observe that the unconscious part of our person is in constant and lively association with every environment which partakes of this form of life—namely, with God, with angels, with devils, and with human beings.

The unconscious part of our life constitutes the natural root-connection with the all-life. Through our subconsciousness the bottomless and endless ocean of life which surrounds us on all sides washes into our person and fills and molds it with its impressions and subconscious life-promptings.

The conscious part of our life is like an island which shoots up out of the endless ocean of life. We could also express it in this way: It is that part of

life which is our *peculiar possession*. The unconscious part of our life, on the other hand, is a part of the great ocean of life over which we have no personal control, either with our mind or will.

Along what paths and according to what laws the life-currents move in the great ocean of life with which we communicate through subconsciousness, we are not qualified to trace, at least not at the present time. The laws governing the subconscious life are being studied energetically today. And it is possible that they will gradually come to be known somewhat better.

But for the time being we can only point out that our souls *are* in a peculiar subconscious life-communication of this kind, without being able to show further *how* this takes place. We see before our eyes every day that this hidden communication unites souls and fills them with a peculiar common life, which can only be explained by means of subconsciousness. We see how larger or smaller groups of people in this way can be filled with the same moods and emotions, the same thoughts and fantasies, and the same plans and purposes.

Let us only think of what we call "the family spirit," "the national soul," "the spirit of the times," and "public opinion."

To illustrate this I shall cite the following two examples.

When World War I broke out in 1914, we saw in a characteristic way how the German national soul awakened and set the whole nation in motion. Let us first look at the common *conceptions* which immediately filled great and small souls in the whole German Empire: the German people were surrounded by enemies who begrudged them their ability and power, and who now planned to crush a disagreeable competitor. Let us next observe the common *feelings* which surged through this richly emotional nation of millions: devotion to Kaiser and people, enthusiasm for the German people's God-given task as the world-ruling nation. Let us finally notice the common *volitional* life which was instantaneously set in motion in those days, from the aged and down to the little children: a willingness to sacrifice, so imposingly great that it has in all likelihood scarcely an equal in history.

In a community in Norway a horrible murder was committed. A young girl was murdered in broad daylight only a stone's throw away from a much-traveled highway. Her body was mutilated in a most terrible manner. Naturally, a most diligent search for the murderer was made, but he was never found. There was something inexplicable and mysterious about it all. Meanwhile, shortly afterward, the family of the murdered girl pointed out a man in the neighborhood as the murderer. The whole community seized the thought at once, and without further ado called him

the murderer on every occasion when during that time they discussed the murder. The police made an investigation in the case, but found no cause for the accusation. The man himself took the matter in a humorous way and called himself the murderer, and even came to the postoffice and asked if there was any mail for the murderer. But to this day the whole community is convinced that he is the murderer.

Thus the folk-soul works. Without possessing legal proof, the family centers its suspicions upon one certain man. And this unfounded suspicion and antipathy spreads like lightning through the whole community.

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We all have a tendency to value too highly the conscious part of our life. It is, of course, true enough that self-consciousness is the essential elements in the life which we call *personal*. No life is personal without self-consciousness.

Thus also in our relation to God. No adult can become a child of God but through the workings of God upon his unconscious life. The divine influence which leads to repentance must reach up into the conscious life of the individual. For conversion is impossible except by a conscious and free choice.

We easily value the conscious life too highly, nevertheless. We believe that consciousness is the only portal

into personality's sanctuary: the conscience and the will. We overlook the organic continuity which exists between the conscious and the unconscious life in our person.

Subconsciousness may be likened to a *repository* where all thoughts, ideas, moods, and emotions are preserved so absolutely intact that not a single impression which has passed through either our conscious or only our unconscious life disappears. Here all of our experiences in life lie safely stored.

This remarkable fact has been verified in different ways, partly by dream-life and partly by the so-called cleavages of consciousness. Due to an injury to the brain or to some other shock, a person suddenly forgets himself, literally speaking. He does not remember his name, does not remember the past, cannot speak his old language, or eat, or walk, etc. He must learn this all over again, just like a little child. But then it happens occasionally that a person like this suddenly begins to speak fluently a language which he could not speak before the shock. Investigation reveals that the person involved had spoken this language as a little child but had forgotten it again completely, just as children quickly forget a language when they no longer hear or speak it. Thus it comes to light that subconsciousness had preserved this knowledge of the language in question safely and faithfully although

the conscious life had long since forgotten it, yes, not even remembered that it had spoken this language.

Subconsciousness is, meanwhile, not only a repository which preserves a dead mass of psychological impressions. It is much more a *workshop,* which works over all of the accumulated material according to laws which we cannot define more closely.

We experience only that subconsciousness does a quiet and unnoticed work of this kind, the result of which it sends up some fine day from its subterranean workshop into the clear daylight of consciousness.

Thus most of us remember how we sat evenings in childhood working at a difficult problem in arithmetic and finally had to go to bed without having solved it. Then we went at it again the next morning, and then we solved it very easily perhaps. For the subconscious mind had had time to work over the accumulated impressions, and now it sent the solution at once up into our conscious thinking.

We who preach the Word of God often have the experience that a text gives us great difficulty. It is impossible for us to find a line of thought leading into the text and opening it for us. We sit for hours, perhaps, working on our discourse, but with no results. Finally we are compelled to leave our work, downcast and dejected. A day or two later we attack the same text, likely with a great deal of determination. And then, we often have the experience that the text

opens itself and we see with our inner eye our whole sermon; it is a joy and a pleasure to work it out. Just such service subconsciousness is willing to perform. We should, therefore, see to it that it gets the time and the opportunity to do this work for us, whether it be problems in arithmetic or sermons or other things.

The common sense of the people has long since discovered this fact, long before any research worker had discovered its psychological foundation and consistency. Experienced and sober people never acquiesce very easily and quickly to a new plan which is proposed to them. On such occasions they reply: "I'll have to sleep on it." Experience tells them, that they will be able to pass judgment more clearly in the matter when they have slept on it. Then the subconsciousness gets time to consider the matter from all angles.

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It is not difficult to see that a knowledge of this subconscious life will be of the greatest importance both for our *judgment* and in our *treatment* of the child.

In the first place, the child communicates with its environment long before it is at all conscious of it. Through the subconsciousness it gathers from its very birth, yes, even before birth, impressions of which the subconsciousness never lets go but retains and assimilates.

In the second place, the conscious life of the child grows out of the subconscious. The subconscious life's store of impressions gives the conscious life its fundamental control and marks the course of the child's later personal life.

In the third place, this should give us much confidence in our association with and our treatment of both children and adults. The good and the sacred impressions we are in position to give them they will never lose, even though they were not conscious of the impressions they received. By filling their subconsciousness with sacred impressions we are permitted to have a part in forming their later personal life.

This will also give us a great deal of confidence in associating with adults, especially in our relation to the unsaved. We pray for them and we speak with them now and then about the one thing needful. But we understand that our exhortations so easily tire them and harden them. We see how they live their worldly life thoughtlessly and indifferently. This knowledge may make us discouraged and despondent.

Then it is well to know the subconscious life and realize that all the impressions we leave with them, both the conscious and the unconscious, through our actions, our words, our being, and our spirit, are all accumulated in the subconsciousness, and not one is lost. And while they live their conscious life thoughtlessly and frivolously, their subconsciousness is work-

ing quietly but surely with the impressions received. Some fine day it will send the result up into the conscious life in the form of a thought of God which will have such peculiar power that it will concentrate the whole soul-life about itself. Then we say that the person concerned is *awakened*. Here we have the antecedent psychological history of awakening, how it is quietly prepared day by day down in the depths of the soul, even though neither we nor the person himself can, for the time being, see or notice it.

I do not desire in any way by this psychological explanation of awakening to obscure or weaken the work of the Spirit in a person's awakening. I only wish to point out *where* the Spirit works. During the whole preparation of the awakening he works in man's subconsciousness in a way that we cannot trace definitely. We know only from Scripture that he has access to work within the subconscious life. It is told of John the Baptist that he was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15).

This quiet working of the Spirit which leads to the awakening in man's subconsciousness does not, meanwhile, do away with his free choice. The work of the Spirit in the subconsciousness certainly no man can withstand. He has reserved unto himself the right to do this without asking man for permission. But this work of the Spirit in the adult will never lead to *repentance* and salvation unless it extends from the sub-

consciousness up into the life consciously controlled by the will. Here it is that man's choice comes in. Here man determines either to make room for what the Spirit has accomplished and now consciously convicts him, or that he will employ his consciousness and his will to reject this work of the Spirit.

Sudden conversions are spoken of. That there are such is absolutely true. There are people who may have lived in a worldly, even ungodly, way for years. But they are suddenly awakened out of this condition, either at a meeting or through some other experience. They make their decision and allow themselves to be saved on the spot.

But in reality this did not come to pass as suddenly as it would seem. It appeared that way only in the consciousness of the one concerned. He did not recognize the quiet work which the Spirit had done during all these years in his subconscious life.

This circumstance gives us confidence when we pray and prepare for revivals. We are to rejoice in the fact that the Spirit works quietly in people's subconsciousness. We are to be permitted to follow the Spirit in this work in man's subconscious life. That, indeed, is the great secret of *intercessory prayer*. By means of intercession we accompany the Spirit into the secret depths of the souls and influence them, although they do not for the time being surmise it.

IV

Baptism and the Word

FOLLOWING this investigation both of what Baptism is and of the child's psychological nature, we now turn to an inquiry into the relation between the grace which God has given the child in Baptism and the grace which he desires to impart to it through the other means of grace, the Word especially.

For the sake of a general view, we shall first examine this relation in the unconscious period of the child's life, and next in the conscious period of the child's life, and thereupon in the transition years, when the child passes from childhood to the adult age. And, finally, we shall inquire into the relation between the effect of Baptism and of the Word in such as have fallen away from their baptismal grace but are again awakened and converted.

A. In the Unconscious Period

In this period of the child's life we can, of course, speak of the influence of the Word upon the child in a figurative sense only. For the child lives as yet only the unconscious life. But I hold, nevertheless, that it is in order to say a little about this also as far as the unconscious child is concerned. For the little baptized child is to be met, also during this period, with the grace of God as he has ordained it through the other means of grace, even though this influence as yet is only in part and imperfect because of the stage of development in which the child is. As a matter of fact, the child should be surrounded on every side by the grace of God from the very moment of Baptism in order that its whole life from the very first may be formed by and filled with the saving grace of God.

From the moment of Baptism, the little one is a child of God. At that time it entered into a vital union with Christ and became a member of his body. Thereby the child has already become a member of the *communion of saints.* That the branch may be small means nothing in this connection; it is, nevertheless, in vital union with all the other branches on the trunk.

If we thought a little more about this, we would certainly deal differently with the little ones, not only our own little ones, but also other people's. Now we

scarcely notice them when we visit in the homes. But if we looked upon them as members of the communion of saints, we would sacrifice both time and interest for them and do a little for them; if nothing else, we should pray for them.

Now, it is the Lord's will that these little ones should benefit by the communion of saints from the very first moment they are received into it through Baptism. The little child is to lay hold on unconscious impressions from God *through us.* We are to influence and by all the means we possess get in touch with the child in this stage of its development. These means are not so few.

In the first place, we are to influence the child through our *prayers.* I have spoken of this before, and so I shall not dwell upon it in detail here. I shall only remark that this is the means by which we can influence the child even before it is born, and, at the same time, the means by which we at all times may have the strongest grip on the inner life of the child.

In the next place, we influence the child through our *spirit.* We do not think about this very often. We think more about our words and our example. These do influence the child tremendously, certainly much more than we believe, and much more than the child itself has any idea of. But stronger than all our words and all our deeds is our spirit, that is, the *life itself within us,* the life from which our words and our

actions spring forth like little shoots. A person's spirit always influences his surroundings, even when not a word is spoken and not a deed done.

We should note that as John the Baptist in a supernatural way was filled with the Spirit of God *even from his mother's womb,* so our children are filled with our spirit. Our spirit is, therefore, the decisive factor in the life of the child through all the years of childhood, but especially during the years in which we can reach it only through its unconscious life.

Here is the profound responsibility which devolves upon us who are parents or brothers or sisters, or who deal with little children in some other capacity. It is not sufficient that our actions are such that they furnish a good example for the child. It is not enough that our words are good and true, so that they fill the little souls with holy content. Our spirit is still more essential. We must lay the chief emphasis upon having it sanctified if we are not to harm or entirely destroy the soul-life of our children from the very first.

Most parents have no idea of how they harm their children by their untruthful, unclean, worldly, vain, and selfish spirit, injuring their children during the decisive years when the conscious life is being fashioned. I shall not make mention here of the parents who in their desire for pleasure leave their children and scarcely see them during these first years, but concentrate on social activities and leave their children

with servants who fill the little souls with their frivolous, unclean, and hypocritical spirit.

On the other hand, there are many parents who benefit their children more than they imagine by so living that the little ones are privileged to breathe the clear and holy atmosphere of a God-fearing home from the very first moment. That means something else and more than to provide them with fine clothes, many toys, a comfortable home, and, finally, a large inheritance. Remember this, you who are a father or a mother, or are to become one.

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The child is, then, to meet something of the divine in its parents, and that from the very first moment.

Now there is repeated in the child's life what we see in the history of Israel. The first thing God could reveal to this childlike people was his will, his holy law. God's holy will is the first thing of which the little child also can get an impression.

The child is to meet the will of God first in the moral will of its parents, that is, through their *discipline*. Many parents are not mindful of this. Their discipline therefore, becomes exceedingly casual and is most generally designed to prevent the child from doing something which is displeasing to the parents for the moment.

This little child has the sinful natural life within

itself. It is now the parents' task through discipline to meet and to counteract the selfishness and obstinacy in the little one. For the impressions which now begin to enter the subconsciousness of the child are the very ones which are to contribute to the formation of its later personal life.

The obstinacy in the child crops out immediately. It cries until it gets its own way. If it does not get its own way immediately, it cries still more. If it is humored now, it will take into its subconsciousness the abiding and decisive impression that nothing more is necessary in order to get its own way than to cry.

It is this subconscious stubbornness in the little one that the parents are to meet with their discipline. "But," many parents ask, "how can the little one be disciplined as long as it does not understand a word or a gesture from us?" Indeed, that is simple enough. The discipline must be directed toward the subconsciousness of the little one, and the child will very quickly perceive the purpose of the discipline. Let it cry as long as it pleases. Do not humor it in its whims and fancies. Then you will see that the child's subconsciousness soon gives it the information that it is useless to cry. If the child has had the experience of crying, for instance, three nights in succession until it has finished, without being picked up and carried and lulled, it will sleep the fourth night and all the succeeding nights in peace, without causing any com-

motion. Thus the child will be spared all that terrible crying and the parents all the night vigils and the other wear and tear involved in running to the assistance of the little tyrant every time it pleases him to cry.

"But," says the tender mother, "what if the little one should be crying because it is sick!" Of course, an examination is necessary in such a case. And that is not so difficult either. If the child is fed and cared for at the right time; if it is warm and dry; and if its appetite is good and its temperature normal, it can safely be allowed to cry until it ceases of its own accord. Its little life will then soon enter upon good habits. It will sleep, eat, croon, and chuckle, and play a little with its fingers until it goes to sleep again.

This bringing up of the child even in infancy is the child's first meeting with the will of God. Through this determined and purposeful parental discipline the child meets for the first time the unrelenting, absolute will, which it is useless to oppose. This is the only impression of the sovereignty of God the child can receive at this age. But then, too, it can receive a strong impression of this if the parents enforce this discipline.

This discipline should continue through childhood, only it must be extended and enforced by more means and methods, according as the conscious life of the child develops. The essential elements in all discipline

is just this, that the child throughout its whole childhood meets father's and mother's moral will as an inflexible one which can be moved neither by crying nor by parleying and begging. Therefore, the *obedience* of the child is the sure sign whether the bringing up has been rightly undertaken. The child should be accustomed to obey father's and mother's words *immediately* and *without raising objections.* For that reason, do *not* give *many rules* for the child's daily life. But you must be consistent and patient enough to demand obedience to the rules that you do give.

Such discipline during the infancy of the child will be of decisive importance for the whole future life of the child.

In the first place: For the child which has from the very first met the absolute and holy will which it has been futile to oppose; for the child which from the very beginning has had the impression stamped upon its subconsciousness that its own will must yield, it will be much easier all the way later on to submit to the discipline of its parents. The discipline will, therefore, be less painful both for the child and for the parents.

In the second place: It will be so much easier for this child to submit its will to that of its brothers and sisters and other children. Its childhood will, therefore, be much easier and much more pleasant.

In the third place: It will also be easier for this child

to find its place in society at large and to submit to the law of the land. Those children, on the other hand, who have been able to get their own way by crying whenever they took a notion or a fancy, have actually been reared by their sentimental parents for a career in crime. Look, for instance, at the little three-year-old who in anger throws himself to the ground and spits at his own mother and kicks and strikes in all directions. Do you not see the criminal in the little one? The only thing he lacks is strength to carry out what he in his brutal and uncontrolled mind wishes. When this child's obstinacy has been humored ten or twelve years more, and his stubbornness and physical powers have increased manifold, he will be fairly well trained for a career in crime.

In the fourth place: The child that has learned from its very infancy to bend its own will in submission to the will of God in the discipline of its parents has thereby gained a great advantage in its relation to God. It will be easier for it to be kept in the baptismal life with God. For it will be easier for it to subject its will to the will of God. And should it fall away from God, it will most certainly be easier for it to repent again. The most difficult thing in repentance is to surrender one's will fully in subjection to God's will. And this child has had regular training in doing this from its very infancy, both subconsciously and consciously.

B. In the Conscious Period of Childhood

The great commission of Jesus commands us to make disciples of all by *baptizing* them and *teaching* them to keep all things whatsoever he commanded.

The *Word* as a means of grace is, therefore, to step in and do its work together with the grace of *Baptism*. As soon as we can make ourselves at all understood to the little ones by talking to them, we should begin to speak to them about Jesus. Many, however, postpone this because they think it is useless to speak to the child about these high and holy things before the child is old enough to "understand" them.

This is due to a misunderstanding of the child's nature. The child's strength, as long as it is a child, does not lie in "understanding" the reality it experiences, that is, thinking it over and finding the logical or rational relation between its experiences. On the contrary, the child's strength lies in receiving strong and vital impressions of everything it sees and hears. Feeling and imagination are most strongly developed in the child. And by means of these it receives and assimilates far more impressions of reality than we adults generally think, because our attitude toward the reality we experience is essentially reflective and cognitive and not intuitive and unreflective like the child's.

As a result of this, the child grasps much more than it "understands" of what we tell it about Jesus, granted

that it is told in a somewhat childlike way, that is, in words and expressions that the child is accustomed to hearing and using, and in a descriptive and graphic way, so that the child's imagination is stirred and everything is portrayed before the inner eye of the child.

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With regard to *the relation between the Word and Baptism,* two views, especially, have asserted themselves, views so common that we must take them up for discussion at this point before we proceed.

The one emphasizes quite correctly that Baptism is the means whereby the little one is regenerated. From the moment of Baptism the child has life in God. And now comes the Word as the means whereby the baptismal life which the little one possesses is, through the nurturing and guiding work of the Word, to unfold its indwelling vitality.

And wherever the Word is permitted to do its work through the Christian home, the Christian school, and the Christian church, there the baptismal life will grow quietly. Yet it is different with different people. In some it grows vigorously and quickly; in others, on the contrary, slowly and wretchedly. It may grow very differently, also, at different times in the life of the individual. During certain periods, both in childhood and in adult age, he may be laid hold of strong-

ly and live a rich life in God. At other times the influence of the world may be stronger, so that his religious interests are weakened, and he may even forget God.

This view, however, has no use for and does not allow for awakening and repentance. The life in God has not died out. The baptismal life-germ lies in the depths of the soul. It is merely overgrown with worldliness and needs only to be dug out again. The Word is to do that. And the Word can do this in the easiest and simplest way by speaking to these worldly Christians about their Baptism and telling them that they *are* the children of God from the moment of Baptism. In this way these thoughtless people will most quickly be brought to see how they have neglected their God-life, and then they will begin to tend and care for it again.

This view cannot recognize awakening and repentance in the sense of *a decisive break* with the past life. Such a break or complete turning about would be fundamentally opposed to the view itself, namely, that the baptismal life in this worldly person never has died out. Here there can be no break, but only one line of life, which may indeed wind often in its course, but which never breaks.

The usual preaching of awakening and repentance is considered a foreign element which has gained entrance into the Lutheran Church, and is looked upon

as an incursion from the Reformed Church through pietism.

On the basis of this fundamental principle it is natural that the function of the Word with regard to those who are baptized is conceived of as being *educational*. Through the Christian influence of the home, the school, and the church, the object is to encourage, prompt, guide, admonish, discipline, and chasten this child of God, according to its behavior at all times, whether child or adult, either as a good and obedient child, willing to learn, or as a recalcitrant child of God.

And since the important point in all bringing up is to appeal to the best in the child, it is essential that the fact be understood as clearly as possible, that this baptized person *is* the child of God. In this way he himself will most easily come to realize how unreasonable it is to act toward God and man as he does.

For that reason the opinion is held that the preaching which speaks of these people as dead and as backsliders from God is both *unpedagogical* and *unpsychological*. It will only discourage these disobedient children of God, bewilder them, and in that way perhaps even prevent them from rising from their disobedience and obstinacy.

As in all other bringing up, the quiet influence of the home, school, and Church through good, inspiring examples and wholesome habits of living is also

here the most effective. The child is to be led into the common religious life of the Christian home through family devotions, family singing, and a sound Christian home life. In like manner, it is to be accustomed early to take part in the children's services. And in due time it is to enter into the Christian work of the Church in which it comes natural for it to participate at all times.

And too great demands should not be placed upon the religious life of these people. Even though they are as yet pretty worldly, we should accept their assistance in Christian work with joy and gratitude because it is just this work which will bind them to Church and Christianity, and give them more strength to oppose the temptations of worldliness. The confidence which is thus placed in them will be a mighty moral lever in this as well as in all bringing up.

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The other view of the relation between Baptism and the Word has not been analyzed so well nor made plain to the intellect. It is, therefore, more difficult to present. But, at all events, the gist of it is, that it places such a strong emphasis upon awakening and repentance that it cannot allow of a real regeneration in Infant Baptism. It does not aim to deny this article of our faith; nay, it is not even conscious of being in disagreement with the Confessions.

But it emphasizes so strongly that the real life in God is attained primarily through the awakening and converting effect of the Word that the regenerative effect of Baptism is pushed aside in consciousness. Baptism is never mentioned except every time it is desired to admonish the hearers against the dead faith which goes to sleep on Baptism.

What conception of the gracious effect of Baptism is thus held, it is, as has already been mentioned, not easy to say. But, consistently carried out, such preaching will lead to this, that Baptism is not considered regenerative, but only a part of God's preparatory grace, which, like the preparatory effect of the Word, aims at the awakening and conversion of the one who is baptized.

According to this view, the relation between Baptism and the Word is, then, that the Word supplements and completes the gracious work begun by Baptism. Regeneration is therefore logically relegated to the time of conversion.

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In trying to decide with respect to these two views, we shall begin by taking sides with the first-mentioned in this, that it emphasizes so strongly the regenerative effect of Baptism in the child. This established truth must not be altered, either because of difficulty in *understanding* the regeneration of the child or be-

cause of difficulty in reconciling it with the preaching of awakening and repentance.

The child is born anew in Baptism. And this birth is, like every birth, an occurrence which cannot be supplemented afterwards. In Baptism the child becomes a true child of God.

But in regard to the relation between Baptism and awakening and repentance, we must dissent from the first-mentioned view.

We must, in the first place take exception to the idea that a baptized person retains a living germ of the baptismal life within itself also when he is living in sin without acknowledging it and without honestly confessing it. This idea is nothing but the human intellect's attempt to speculate about these inner psychological conditions without keeping to the safe ground of Scripture.

If we will let Scripture guide us also in this, we shall get the definite information that only they who have the Son have the life. "He that hath not the Son of God *hath not the life*" (1 John 5:12). "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is *not in him*" (1 John 2:12). "Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world *maketh himself an enemy of God*" (James 4:4). "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, *he taketh it away*" (John 15:2). "This my son was *dead,* and is *alive again*" (Luke 15:24).

The Word is to accomplish awakening and repent-

ance in these baptized people who through conscious, unacknowledged, and unopposed sin have put to death the life with God which they received in Baptism. And that is the true meaning of these words: they must as dead be awakened from the dead. And they must *break* with their worldly life and *turn completely about,* leave the broad way, and enter upon the narrow one.

We shall touch upon the more intimate relation between this effect of the Word and baptismal grace more in detail in the selection dealing with the conversion of the backslider.

We must, in the second place, take exception to the first-mentioned view also as regards the work of the Word in those baptized persons who remain in their baptismal grace. The life which the child received in Baptism needs not only the nurture and guidance of the Word. It needs also the awakening and converting work of the Word. I shall now try to show how the baptismal life of the child is unable to lay aside its childishness and pass over into adult life with God unless the Word leads it through *awakening* and *repentance.*

In the child as well as in the adult, the Word is to clear away the hindrances which prevent the powers of grace received in Baptism from developing their indwelling life and doing their work of creating anew the one who is baptized.

These hindrances lie in the child as well as in the adult principally in the conscious life.* For that reason the gracious work of the Word is necessary as soon as the conscious life begins to awaken, because these hindrances assert themselves immediately. By way of a beginning, let us sum up briefly the awakening and converting work of the Word thus:

The work of the Word in the child as well as in the adult is to assist it

(1) to *see* these hindrances,

(2) to *will* to overcome them,

(3) to *be able* to overcome them.

In the first place, then, the Word is to awaken the child to see how it itself prevents the regenerating powers of Baptism from unfolding themselves. And since the hindrances lie in the inborn evil nature, which the child received at birth, therefore the Word must convince the child with respect to this inborn evil vitality.

This work of the Word in convincing the child of this must, of course, proceed slowly and gradually. But from the very beginning we must keep our goal in view. And the goal in the acknowledgment of sin is:

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*In a previous section I have shown some of the hindrances which lie in the child's *unconscious* life, and have pointed out the most important ways by means of which we can help the child to get these hindrances cleared away even before the conscious life awakens.

(1) The definite break in the heart with all *conscious* sin,

(2) The humble acknowledgment of the wickedness of the indwelling nature, with its love of sin and its enmity toward God, and, thereby, the acknowledgment of total helplessness, so that the soul will trust alone in the forgiving and regenerating grace of God.

Now this acknowledgment occurs in the child only in an incomplete form, a fact which many parents do not recognize. They seek, therefore, in their well-meant zeal for the child to force an acknowledgment of sin for which the child as yet is not spiritually mature.

Throughout its whole childhood the child is unable to reach farther than to what is mentioned above in the first paragraph: to acknowledge and break with all *conscious sin.* And neither do the conscious sins include very much in the case of the child, at least to begin with. As yet it is able to acknowledge as sin just a few things: especially disobedience to parents, naughtiness toward brothers and sisters, telling lies, and saying bad words.

With regard to the last two of these, it is necessary to be very careful with the child in the beginning. It is not so easy for the child, to begin with, to distinguish between what it has seen and heard and what

it has been imagining. For that reason we can often catch it telling falsehoods, and we are easily inclined to punish it for telling a lie. We must be careful about this in early years and not undertake to punish before we have assured ourselves that the child has spoken contrary to what it knows to be right.

In regard to bad words, too, the child may, to begin with, be entirely innocent. It has heard these bad words out among older children or adults, and they are repeated in all innocence. In that case it is essential for us not to punish the child, but to instruct it, and at the same time turn its attention away from these words.

Now the problem for us is to help the child to see *more* and *more* of such sins as a child is able to recognize as sin. But here, too, it is necessary to proceed according to the laws of pedagogy, and not burden the child with moral precepts which it is as yet not mature enough to grasp.

We should, meanwhile, not only help the child to see and recognize more sins; we should above all help it to gain a *deeper* conception of *sin itself*. For that reason, we must try to direct its thoughts inwardly to the root of sin, the sinful mind. This is not easy. Nevertheless, there are certain sinful *thoughts* which the child can quickly recognize as sin, namely its thoughts when angry, bitter and hateful thoughts; likewise envious thoughts; later also vain and am-

bitious thoughts; and, finally, toward the end of childhood, unchaste thoughts, when the sexual desires are aroused and the child begins to indulge in these desires in an impure thought-life.

Most important for us all in acknowledging sin is unfeigned sorrow because of *sin itself* and not merely on account of its *consequences*. We should therefore, seek to develop in the child deep and sincere regret because it has grieved Jesus by its sins. This is undoubtedly the most difficult problem in pedagogy. And in solving it we must make use of all the means at our disposal.

When the child has done something wrong, and you discipline it, you must above all have the child understand how grieved you are because of its sin. For that reason you must never discipline the child when you are wrought up with anger. In that case you will create *fear* in the child, but not *regret*. On the contrary, when you discipline the child, you must show it that it grieves you to punish it, and above all that you are sorry that it has sinned. If it is natural for you to cry, let the child see your tears. They will burn themselves into the soul of the child, and be effective as long as it lives.

When you have disciplined the child, at least when you have disciplined it more seriously than usual, you should always bring the discipline to a close by kneeling, helping the child to pray to Jesus for forgiveness.

You pray first. Then let the child pray afterwards. And when that has been done, you are to *declare* to the child the forgiveness of sins. Then you should draw the little one to yourself, and tell it that it has now received forgiveness from you; and Jesus, too, has forgiven it, so that everything is forgotten and all is well again. And Jesus will help the little one to be good and not do this again.

If this procedure is followed, the child's conscience will little by little be bound to Jesus, and thus its relationship to God will become something more than pious feelings during the moments of prayer. The little one should learn to know that it is bound in its conscience to Jesus *before* sinning, and *after* sinning to feel deep regret at having grieved Jesus.

If we succeed in this respect in bringing up the child, it will little by little become inwardly mature for the more independent life with God which in a natural way grows out of the child's dependency upon father and mother. In *early* childhood the child should cling to its parents both religiously and morally. But in *later* childhood it should little by little be inwardly released from this dependency and begin to associate in private with God and not only together with others at family devotions and evening prayers.

This can be accomplished in the simplest and most natural way by developing the conscience in the way I have just sketched. The result will be that the child

itself will feel a desire to speak alone with Jesus about these things in which it has grieved him. And it is, indeed, one of our happiest experiences with our children when we for the first time receive assurance that the little one *alone* has sought Jesus to make up with him and receive forgiveness.

In this way the child is also naturally led to use the Word of God without help from others. And we should provide our children with New Testaments as soon as they have learned to read. To begin with we should assign them how much they should read each day. For it is essential that little children be given *definite* assignments; otherwise it will all appear insurmountable to them, and they will quickly grow tired.

Along this way the child will also finally be led to seek help through conversation about its little life in God. We must ask God for this intimate confidence. And if we have received it, we must on our knees pray to God every day that we may retain it. For in the first place, it is most blessed both for the parents and for the child. And, in the second place, it is of inestimable value for the child during the difficult transition years.

Even as the child's knowledge of sin is both incomplete and immature throughout all of childhood, so, too, is its knowledge of grace. The child does not have the prerequisites necessary in order to apprehend the innermost and the deepest things in the grace of

God, just because it does not as yet know the deep root of its sin, namely, the heart's love of sin and enmity toward God.

The element of grace which the child can grasp is God's willingness to forgive sin, that he helps the child to resist temptations, and helps it also in other things, both great and small. There are parents who have not understood this, and who have wanted to compel their children to see their inner depravity and know the grace of God like adults. And they have, thereby, against their own will and without realizing it, injured the religious development of their children, and in many instances driven their children away from God.

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Before we leave the age of childhood and pass on to the transition years, we must first take up the question of *children* who have fallen away from their baptismal covenant.

First a few words concerning the falling away of children in general. As mentioned above, there is a camp which denies that a baptized child can fall away from God. They maintain that the life which the little one received in Baptism does not die out even though the child does not seek God in prayer and in the reading of his Word, and does not honestly acknowledge and struggle against its sin. This view,

however, is contrary to Scripture, as shown above. And we must hold fast that the passages of Scripture cited above apply to both children and adults.

Concerning the falling away of children, let us first remind ourselves by way of consolation that a baptized child *cannot* fall away from God as long as it lives only in the unconscious life. Secondly, in the early part of the child's conscious age it cannot *of itself* break with God. If the baptismal life of the child dies during these years, it is the fault of the parents. In that case they have neglected to give the child's God-life the nature and guidance which it needed as soon as the conscious life began to awaken.

In the third place, about midway between the age of two and the transition from child to adult, the child reaches a conscious, volitional life developed to such a degree that it has the necessary psychological qualifications for determining its own childlike relation to God. At that age the child itself *can* break with God.

Concerning the marks which indicate a falling away in children, we must, on the one hand, observe that both in the case of the child and of the adult it is a question of the inner life, and not merely of outward religious forms, such as prayer, reading, and attendance upon services. It depends upon the attitude in which the child performs these religious exercises. Of course, we cannot expect the same mature mind as in

grown persons. Everything is done in a childish way. Proof that there is life in the religious exercises of the child is this, that the child sincerely confesses to God the sins of which it is conscious in its childhood stage of development. The child that lives in conscious sins, without acknowledging and struggling against them, has fallen away from God even though it prays and reads the Bible.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to be aware of the child's dependency upon the Christian guidance of its parents. As mentioned above, the parents should take the child with them to the Lord and help the child to ask him forgiveness for its sin. I would, therefore, express the relationship thus: that child has fallen away from God which *will not* from the heart ask God's forgiveness for the sins of which it is conscious when the parents seek to have the child kneel and make up with God.

If a child has thus fallen away from God, we should speak the Word of God to it for the purpose of leading it to *awakening* and *repentance*. True, there are some who think that this is unnecessary. They think that we should rather try to speak to the child about Jesus so that it will again be induced to love him, and be good at home as well as away from home. But this line of thought is both unbiblical and unpsychological both as concerns children and grown persons.

Faith is always psychologically conditioned by *re-*

gret and *reconciliation.* Thus it is in life even between people. If I have offended a person, a *confidential* relationship between us cannot be restored before I am willing to confess my offense against him, even though he is willing to forgive me.

For that reason we must speak to the fallen child for the purpose of leading it to awakening and repentance. It is a distortion of the Gospel to tell these children that Jesus is just as pleased with them. On the contrary, we should tell them that Jesus grieves over them. And we should tell them of their sin, namely, that they do not care to have Jesus watch over their daily life and that they will not heed the reproach of their conscience. But at the same time we must tell them how Jesus desires to save them from this wicked and untruthful life. We should tell them about the suffering and death of Jesus for them. Nothing else is so certain to melt the defiance and obstinacy of the little heart. And we are to tell them that Jesus is just waiting for them to come and tell him things as they are: for then he is willing to forgive all.

But this must be made known to the child *in a childlike way,* a condition which many overlook in the home and in the Sunday school.

C. In the Transition Period

I now desire to speak of the *God-fearing* child's religious transition from child to adult.

It became a child of God in Baptism. And it has lived as a child of God ever since, in childish acknowledgment of and opposition to all conscious sin. Jesus says about the little child that in its relationship to God it is a model for us grown people. Some might, therefore, ask if this child needs to experience a special awakening and repentance during the transition from child to adult.

To this may be replied that the God-life of the child is indeed a model for us adults when viewed *from one side.* But at the same time, viewed *from another side,* there is something *incomplete* and *imperfect* about the God-life of a child. Paul expresses it thus: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things" (1 Cor. 13:11). And we shall now try to show what takes place when the God-fearing child puts away the childish things in its life with God.

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We have noted that the God-fearing child gradually gains a *deeper* conception of its sin. How rapidly this development may progress is dependent mainly upon two factors, a subjective and an objective. The *first* is that the child receive the necessary guidance from parents or others concerning the will of God. We should note, however, that this guidance is not to be given

in words only, but also in a holy life which the child can see every day. *Secondly,* that the child is scrupulously honest and that it conscientiously follows the little light which it has at all times been able to see. In that case it will go from light to greater light wonderfully fast.

Its knowledge will, in that case, very early progress inwardly from wicked deeds and bad words to the *attitude of mind.* There is nothing to prevent a ten-year-old child from beginning to see and to struggle against the sins of the mind.

The child's battle against sin is thereby transferred to a different plane. To struggle against sin in word and deed may be hard enough for the child. But to combat sinful thoughts, the sins of the mind, is many times as hard. And what makes the battle especially hard is this, that the child now begins to notice the sins of *omission,* not only the sins of *commission.*

It sees now that God looks at the attitude of mind back of the deeds. And the question soon arises which is destined to destroy the God-fearing child's childish peace: *"Do you love God?"* You pray; you read the Bible; you go to church. That is true. But do you do it because you love God? Do you hate sin? You struggle against sin, to be sure; but do you do it because you hate sin?

To begin with, these questions will only bewilder the child. These thoughts are entirely new. The child knows neither what to think nor what to do. This, too, is a step in God's gracious leading of the God-fearing child. It will serve to remove the superficiality and cocksureness with which as a child it decided everything, also things religious. At the same time it serves to give the child an unconscious or semiconscious feeling of total helplessness.

As the child continues working candidly with these questions, it will be compelled to say to itself: "I do not hate sin. At heart I love it, but I dare not commit it because I am afraid of the temporal and eternal consequences. Of course, I can walk around envying my playmates who have the courage to indulge in their sinful desires. And since my attitude toward sin has become such, it is not at all strange that my relationship to God has gone to pieces. I pray, of course, and read the Bible also; but I do not do it because I love God. I do it because I know that those who desire to be Christians are supposed to do it. Possibly I do it most because I do not want Father and Mother to suffer the pain of seeing me quit. You know they have rejoiced so much because of my life with God."

When the child first begins to struggle with these questions, it suffers very severely under it and grieves bitterly because it has gone wrong inwardly. But after

some time it does not even feel this grief. It sees its condition, but is no longer moved by it. The heart has become cold and hard.

The baptized and God-fearing child's *awakening is complete.*

What the child has now seen compels it to consider itself a *fallen child:* only the outward *forms* of its previous life in God remain. And these forms are nothing but an abomination to God. The child knows that it is baptized, and that it became a child of God in Baptism. It knows, too, that it lived a happy life with God during its childhood. But what good does all this do now when it has lost its life in God, and has only the form of godliness left?

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Why does the God-fearing child have to go through this experience? For the simple reason that it cannot put away childish things and become a grown person in its relation to God in any other way. As I pointed out above, it is the work of the Word to show the baptized child the hindrances to its baptismal life which the child has within itself, namely the evil nature which it received through its natural birth.

This awakening work of the Word has been in progress ever since the Word could begin to influence the child. But now for the first time the child

has reached that stage in its psychological development when the Word can complete the awakening, that is, convince the child fully of the evil nature with which it is endowed.

And let us also note that the child simply cannot experience this awakening enlightenment of the Word without being affected in the way I have shown. It comes to see something which deprives it of every hope of being in the right relation to God.

This experience is also necessary for the child, and that not only because it needs to experience and acknowledge its indwelling *sin;* it is precisely to the same degree necessary for the child's experience of *salvation.* As pointed out above, the experience of the child is just as incomplete and immature with regard to sin as it is with regard to grace. Throughout its whole childhood the child has never apprehended that the grace of God is unmerited, because it has never felt the root of sin in its mind, which does not love God but loves sin.

On the other hand, the child has now gained such a knowledge of its sin that it cannot get along with its childish experience of grace. It must now also pass over to a new plane in its experience of salvation and the assurance of salvation. If grace is to do its work in the child, then the child must experience it as unmerited grace, which it indeed is.

In Baptism the child becomes a partaker in the full-

ness of God's grace. But because of the child's psychological condition, grace has not as yet been able to do its complete work. The child has not been able to make use of more than a small portion of the grace it has received. But now, because of this experience of sin, it is able to experience the innermost essence of baptismal grace: its being unmerited.

It has now become clear to us that the awakening affects the God-fearing child in exactly the same way as it affects the grown person who has fallen away from God. It works in both a knowledge of sin that reaches into the heart's world, until both feel themselves perfectly helpless in the grip of sin, because they love sin and are unable to change this love.

The difference between awakening in the adult and awakening in the child is only a difference in length of time. In the child it takes at least from twelve to fifteen years, from the age of two, when the conscious life awakens, to the age from fifteen to twenty when the child passes over from childishness to maturity in its religious life. In grown persons it *is possible* for the awakening to come about more quickly because there is nothing in their psychological development which acts as a hindrance. But usually it takes several years, also in adults, even though they themselves are not conscious of it. See above in the section about the unconscious life.

When the awakening of the God-fearing child is complete, it necessitates a *choice*. This choice is unavoidable. But *what* it will choose is left to the child to determine.

If the child submits to the conviction it has gained through its awakening, it will experience *repentance*.

There are, to be sure, many who would not use the term "repentance" in mentioning this experience of the God-fearing child. But as far as I am able to understand, it is only a peculiarly stiff-necked dogmatism which prevents them from doing so. At least, their reasons cannot be logical or terminological ones. For what the God-fearing child now experiences is so precisely the same as the backslider experiences during his conversion that it is both natural and proper on logical as well as on terminological grounds to use the same term.

Of course, there is a difference. But it is of a *theoretic nature*. For the God-fearing child has not been off into the far country, as the backslider has. On that account it does not have such an outwardly sinful life to turn from. Let us, however, observe that the child certainly *feels* like a backslider. For that reason it experiences in its consciousness a choice between the two kinds of life, exactly like the backslider. Furthermore, the backslider's *real* battle during conversion is not against the outwardly coarse sins, but

against what the Epistle to the Hebrews calls "repentance from dead works" (Heb. 6:1). Thus the struggle toward repentance becomes the same also theoretically for the God-fearing child as for the backslider.

There is indeed, a difference here both of an objective and of a subjective nature; but it is so immaterial for the choice in repentance that it really does not enter into consideration. I shall, nevertheless, mention it.

The God-fearing child is better situated than the backslider when it comes to *outward* sin. The God-fearing child has, of course, never been subject to this. It may have *fallen* into such sins. But it has never *lived* in them. It has had to confess them immediately and struggle against them. For that reason, these sinful habits have not had a hold on this child. The backslider, on the other hand, may often have had hard battles on this score. Many have abandoned themselves to a sinful life in drink and unchastity, falsehood and dishonesty. And as a result of habits extending over many years, sin secures such a grip on both body and soul that it means a life and death struggle for the slave of vice in order to be delivered from these sinful habits.

On the other hand, the backslider is more fortunately situated with regard to *inner sins*. Because of his outward sins he is so inwardly crushed that it is not so difficult for him to admit his total helplessness be-

fore God. He looks upon himself as a wreck, and to him it is nothing less than a miracle that God can receive him.

The God-fearing child, however, meets its greatest difficulty right here. Because of its pious life throughout all of childhood—and now, too, its outward life is pious and good—it is difficult for it to acquiesce in the judgment which the Spirit of God through the Word has passed upon its inner life. It is more easily tempted to evade the truth and rest satisfied with its Baptism and its pious life.

Indeed, this is the great *danger* for the God-fearing child during its struggle toward repentance.

In the first place, the whole thing is quite unintelligible to the child. The indolent flesh makes use of this inability to understand in order to tempt the child to let the whole thing go—it will all straighten itself out again. Or it will tempt the child to throw it all aside as a sickly notion: "Did you not become a child of God in Baptism? You have also lived as a child of God ever since. You have never desired to depart from God. Everybody considers you a child of God, too."

In this spiritual condition the child has but little strength with which to oppose sin. It no longer has peace with God in its soul and joy in the Lord as it had before. It is, therefore, powerless, and subject to all sorts of temptations. And if exceptionally strong

and enticing temptations come from without at this time, this child may yield and openly fall from God.

This, however, occurs comparatively seldom. Most God-fearing children who are unable to choose unto repentance permit themselves to be led in another direction. They compromise with their convictions. They try to accommodate themselves to this new spiritual condition. They admit that they are not *right* with God as before. But they console themselves with the idea that what they are now experiencing is the same as grown people often speak of in connection with their Christian life, namely, *attacks of spiritual doubt.* Furthermore, the Scriptures say something about working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. This fear and unrest which they have felt recently are presumably a part of being a true Christian. And thus they calm themselves.

This is so much easier because of the pernicious pastoral care that is often exercised in such instances. These young people who because of their piety have been the pride of the home, the light of the school, and the pastor's joy, go in their spiritual distress either to their dear teacher or pastor and pour out their hearts. Often, even before the anxious souls have had time to tell all that pains them, the poor pastor begins to offer consolation. As soon as he is certain that the dear young child has not fallen openly, he pats him on the shoulder and says: "My dear child, what are

you worrying about now? You have certainly always been so good and honest both toward God and man that you must realize that this is Satan's attempt to embitter your life. Now do not worry any more over this, but go home and thank God, who gave you the good fortune to remain in the grace of your Baptism and thus please both God and man by your upright life."

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Why cannot the God-fearing child keep its spiritual life by retaining its *former* piety? What is it that causes its life with God to die now?

The answer is exceedingly simple: the God-fearing child has now received *new* light. But it will not follow this light. And since this opposition to the Spirit of God is not merely a fall which is regretted and resisted, but develops into persistent obstinacy, the child thereby puts to death the life in God which it has had and in which it has lived from the moment of Baptism.

Now it continues to live a life which it itself and many *others* believe is a Christian life. It is of course, almost as religiously disposed as it is possible to be, by inheritance, by training, and by the religious life which it has lived since Baptism. But the religious life which it now lives after this crisis which we have just described, is nothing but *the natural man's* reli-

gious life in all the Christian forms with which such a God-fearing child is very familiar.

There are not a few of these religious people in the congregations. And none cause the true believers greater difficulty than these. The ungodly and secular world is much more kindly disposed toward the believers. Inwardly the world has a holy respect for people who take Christianity seriously. But these self-righteous religious people are the worst and most persistent enemies of the believers.

This is easily understood. There is something within them which becomes restless whenever they come in touch with living Christianity. Then they are reminded that they swerved at the decisive moment. Their persistent opposition to the true Christians finally becomes a war of defense, prosecuted on their own behalf in order to make themselves and others believe that the life they are living is real Christianity, while the life of the believers is fanaticism and pietism, a self-sufficient and arrogant, sectarian and factional element within the church, which it is necessary to keep in check.

When these people reach the point where they are to choose their calling in life, and they really have the opportunity to choose for themselves, they most naturally decide upon a vocation which has something to do with religion. If they can become pastors, they take that course. If they are unable to provide

themselves with the long and expensive education which is necessary for this, they go to normal schools and become teachers. In both these professions we have had and still have many of these people who will not tolerate living Christianity.

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We have now followed the development of the God-fearing child which will not submit to the humiliating conviction of truth brought on by the awakening. We shall now follow the development of the child which submits.

It believes as mentioned above, that it has fallen out of living fellowship with God and has only the empty forms of life left. It sees its sinful heart which loves sin and not God. It feels the hardness and indifference of its heart, and recognizes, therefore, that it is totally lost. It also believes oftentimes, if not always, that it has sinned against the Spirit. Has it not "tasted the good Word of God and the power of the world to come," and then failed God? It says, too, that God will spew the lukewarm out of his mouth. And when they are so cold and indifferent now, it must be because the Spirit of God has forsaken them.

But in this torture, too, they are honest. They cannot abandon themselves to sin. Neither can they begin to be dishonest with themselves. They confess hon-

estly to themselves and to God their true condition and how they have deported themselves. And now their little hard and obstinate heart is broken. They have now lost all confidence in themselves, and therefore do not resist the unmerited grace of God any longer. For that reason the unmerited grace of God itself can now reach that heart. A short passage of Scripture, explained by the Spirit of God, is sufficient to cause the light to shine. The child now sees that in order to be saved nothing more is necessary than to be a sinner who will not conceal or spare any of his sin. but surrender himself to him who justifies the ungodly.

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We have now followed the baptized, God-fearing child up to the moment when, through awakening and repentance, it has experienced grace unmerited and received the full assurance of salvation through faith in the righteousness of Christ.

But now our question recurs again: What is the relation between Baptism and the Word? Of what significance is it, in other words, to this child that it is baptized?

This question gives rise to serious difficulties, and that not only for the child who experiences what we have just described. As a rule it is unable to get the relationship clear in its mind. Perhaps during this

time its desire for a theoretical explanation is not so very pronounced either. That usually develops later.

The one who is to exercise spiritual care of a God-fearing child in the transition age will also feel the difficulty. How shall we orientate the child, so both Baptism and the Word will be rightly evaluated in its consciousness, and thus give the child all the help it so sorely needs during this critical period?

However, it is true here as in life generally: *life* solves the problems before the *mind does*. With instinctive certainty the child has taken the right position in this difficult situation, although it is by no means able to give the theoretical reasons for its position.

The child takes a very correct position, in the first place, to its Baptism, and that in spite of the wretched pastoral care it has received. It does not deny the gift of Baptism, that it really became a child of God in Baptism. But it does deny that its Baptism is proof that it is a child of God *today*.

In this respect the child's view is entirely correct and wonderfully clear. If the child should make use of its Baptism as a guaranty of its life in God, it would be exactly as absurd as if a believer should make use of his conversion as proof that he now has life in God. On the contrary, the child's view is right when it maintains the *previous* experiences of God's grace are not sufficient proof that it lives with God

now. For it may have lost the gracious life which it once possessed. And that is exactly what the child thinks about itself.

The child also takes the same correct and clear position with regard to its God-fearing childlife. It does not deny that it has lived a happy life with God through all the years of childhood. But it denies that this is any guaranty that it now possesses this life in its heart. In this respect the child's view is marvelously clear, although it certainly is unable to substantiate its view theoretically. It is disengaging itself from the imperfection and incompleteness of its childish relationship to God. The basis of its childish *assurance* of the grace of God was the work of Christ *in its heart,* and it could not be anything else in that stage of its development. But now the time has come when its assurance no longer *can* rest upon this foundation.

This is the inner reason why the child must now look upon both Baptism and its God-fearing life in a new light. It begins now to see that Baptism does not save *ex opere operato,* that is, simply because of the administration of the act of Baptism. In this respect the child sees more clearly than the pastors and teachers mentioned above, who refer the child so anxiously to the fact that it is baptized. These people certainly are not conscious of how Catholic their whole view of Baptism is. They present it to the child as if

the most important thing is that the act of Baptism has been performed upon them.

The child takes a much more biblical and Lutheran view of the matter. It sees that the administration of the act of Baptism is not what counts, but the attitude the child takes toward the salvation given in Baptism. The very moment it gives up building its assurance upon the fact that it is baptized and that it has lived a God-fearing life and surrenders its worldly, self-righteous and God-hating heart to him who justifies the ungodly, at that moment the child takes the right position with reference to its Baptism. Then, for the first time while fully conscious, the child receives the Baptismal gift as it really is, namely, as a gift of *grace.*

Now the child does not build upon the administration of the act of Baptism, nor on what Christ has done *in* the child; on the contrary, the child now clings to and builds its faith on what Christ has done *for* it. Thereby it has apprehended and appropriated to itself the true baptismal gift of salvation. For, as we saw above, the gift of Baptism is that it puts us in fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ.

But even though the child thus in a practical way takes the right position with reference to Baptism, it may be, nevertheless, that it is unable to explain its relation to Baptism *theoretically.* And that is, of course,

a loss to the child in various ways, also in that it delays the development from child to grown person which we have just described. This process would certainly take place more easily and quickly if the child could receive this theoretical guidance concerning the relation between Baptism and the Word, between regeneration in Baptism and awakening and repentance.

Then it would see that Baptism normally leads to the awakening and repentance it now experiences. On the other hand, it would see that the fellowship with God, the assurance of salvation which it now experiences during its awakening and repentance, is neither anything new nor anything else than the grace it received in Baptism; but that the grace of Baptism is just what it has been put in condition to make use of and *apply*. It can by no means receive *more* than it *received* in Baptism; because at that time it received fellowship with Christ and thereby a part in the full propitiation which he made.

D. In Relation to the Conversion of the Backslider

Under the section above entitled *The Conscious Period of Childhood* I have given an account of two opposing views of the relation between Baptism and the Word. The one holds that there is a hidden germ of life from Baptism also in such as live in conscious sins without confessing them and struggling against

them. I showed there that this view is contrary to Scripture. I shall therefore not touch upon that here. Let me simply postulate that the backslider must repent in order to be saved again (Eph. 5:14; 2 Tim. 2:25). And because he is *dead* he must be made *alive again* (Luke 15:24).

The other view I presented gives no room for Baptism in its preaching, but relegates regeneration to the moment of repentance in the case of both the God-fearing child and the backslider. That the backslider was baptized as a child, this preaching mentions only when it desires to warn worldly people against consoling themselves with their Baptism.

This preaching is, however, actuated by one right motive which we must not overlook. It desires to get away from the unbiblical thought that an abiding life-germ from Baptism remains in the backslider. It desires to emphasize that the backslider is *dead* in his trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-5). And, secondly, it desires to emphasize that in repentance something new is created in him, namely, the God-life which he lost when he fell. It desires to emphasize that a *miracle of salvation* takes place every time a backslider is converted.

But having hereby recognized what is justifiable in this view, we must also point out its weakness. We have here a misunderstanding of the dispensation of salvation which the Lord ordained. And the misunder-

standing is quite extensive. It is a misunderstanding of *Baptism,* of *regeneration,* of *repentance,* and of the *continuity* in the work which God does unto salvation in the human soul. Let us now consider this briefly.

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The real gift of Baptism is, as we pointed out above, to transfer to the individual the full salvation which is in Christ. And God never takes back this transference of power. This side of Baptism has been expressed thus by Gisle Johnson: "To be baptized means the same as always to be in the washing of Baptism."

From the time of Baptism as much of this Christian life as the child is able to receive is transferred to it every moment. And it becomes the Word's task to clear away the hindrances to this transference of power in the child, and thus provide more and more room for these powers of salvation. Consequently, God gives nothing more than he gave in Baptism. At that time the child received Christ. And God has nothing greater to give to sinners.

If a baptized person falls away from God, what happens then?

Then this person's living connection with Christ is terminated. He is without life in God and therefore dead and lost (Luke 15:24). But though this person

has turned away from the grace of Baptism, the grace of Baptism has not turned away from this person. God never takes back the baptismal transference of power from one who is baptized. But now after the fall the sinner shuts out God's saving power from his heart and his life. The sinner cannot, however, prevent grace from working upon him. It is shut out from his heart, but continues nevertheless to work upon his heart.

And this it does in various ways, both through consciousness and subconsciousness. The Word works upon the conscious life unto awakening and repentance. And down in the subconscious the psychological impressions which had accumulated before the fall away from God through the gracious effects of Baptism and the Word are at work all the time. Under the guidance of the Spirit, these subconscious psychological movements work toward a meeting with the conscious effects of the Word's message of awakening to the backslider.

Now when this fallen person repents, what takes place?

Nothing is changed from God's side. For he has never withdrawn the powers of salvation which he transferred to this sinner in the hour of Baptism. It was the sinner who through his fall refused to accept them. That was what occurred in the fall. And now through repentance a change occurs only on the side

of the sinner. He now chooses to allow these powers of salvation to gain unhindered access to his soul and body again.

What happens then?

Then these powers of salvation bring forth *the same life* again as they brought forth in the hour of Baptism. At the moment of repentance the sinner's living connection and living fellowship with Christ, which had been terminated, are re-established. And Christ's *life* pours again into him who during the whole period of estrangement was *dead*.

Then we usually say that he is *born anew*. The idea in this expression is correct. We mean to say that a miracle of salvation has taken place in the backslider. Through the supernatural power of God he has been translated from death to life. But the expression is an unfortunate one. It is neither logically nor biblically permissible. For we speak of a *birth* only the first time a person receives life. If a person who is born dies and receives life again, he is not *born* once more, but is *raised from the dead* as, for instance, Lazarus and the Widow of Nain's Son.

The same mode of expression will, therefore, be natural in the realm of spiritual life. A person who has been born anew once, that is, has received the life in God, but who loses this life and recovers it, of him it is not natural to say that he is born anew still an-

other time. We would rather say of him that he is *raised from the dead.*

And this is exactly the expression used in Scripture. As far as I know, Scripture never speaks of a fallen Christian who again repents and receives the life in God, as one who at that time is born anew once more. On the contrary, Scripture says that he is raised from the dead. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and *arise from the dead,* and Christ shall shine upon thee" (Eph. 5:14). As is well known, these words are directed to the believers who had fallen away from fellowship with God. Of these it is written that in order to be saved again they must arise or be awakened from the dead. Jesus also says the same about the Prodigal Son: "This my son was dead, and is alive" (Luke 15:24).

By means of this scriptural terminology we are able to bring out more easily the right relation between Baptism and the word at *this* point. Here we do not have only the misunderstanding that has been mentioned, that the Word is the real means of regeneration and that Baptism is only a part of preparatory grace. Many, also of those who hold fast to Baptism as a means of regeneration, become confused with regard to the relation between Baptism and the Word when it concerns the salvation of the backslider. They think that we have two means of regeneration, name-

ly, Baptism and the Word. And they determine the relation between them thus: Baptism regenerates *all,* whether they are baptized as infants or as adults. The Word, on the other hand, regenerates only such as have fallen away from the life which they received in Baptism.

To substantiate this line of thought they cite a number of passages from Scripture which say that regeneration is accomplished by means of the Word of the Gospel. "Having been begotten again through the Word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth" (James 1:11). "For in Christ Jesus I begat you through the Gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15).

But to understand these words thus is impossible. In the first place, we have already seen that Scripture does not speak of regeneration but of the awakening of the dead when a baptized person again comes to life in God. Scripture speaks, then, of regeneration only when a person for the first time comes to life in God. And that takes place according to Scripture *through Baptism.* (See what has been said above regarding Baptism as a means of regeneration in the section dealing with *The Baptismal Gift of Salvation.)*

What, then, is meant when Scripture speaks of regeneration by means of the Word or the Gospel? Let us first observe that no other regeneration is meant

than the one which takes place in the moment of Baptism; for Scripture does not know of more than this one regeneration.

In the next place, let us observe how we *create* difficulties by our interpretation of Scripture, namely, by a spiritless bondage to the letter of Scripture. When James, Peter, or Paul says that the readers are regenerated by the Word, we read it as though there were added: and not by Baptism. Then the difficulty begins. To the apostles, on the other hand, there was no difficulty regarding the relation between Baptism and the Word. We see that plainly from their writings. These deal with many difficult questions for the benefit of their readers. But they never discuss this question. From this we can conclude that the question never caused them any difficulty.

To be begotten again by the Word and to be regenerated through Baptism are to the apostles one and the same thing, only viewed from different sides, expressed in different ways. We must accustom ourselves to this, that the apostles speak of that side of the matter which interests them in a certain connection, without mentioning the other sides of the matter, which they have spoken of in other places. To the apostles it is self-evident that the Word and Baptism work *together*. The Word brings forth faith (Rom. 10:7). But faith is not built on air. Faith is faith in the Gospel (Mark 1:15). But the Gospel is not something dif-

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ferent from Baptism. The Gospel also contains the words of Jesus about Baptism. Therefore, no one can believe the Gospel without seeking Baptism immediately (See Acts 2:41). To desire and to receive Baptism become, therefore, the first testimony that the Gospel has brought forth faith.

As a result of this, Baptism and the Word are not in the New Testament looked upon as being opposed to each other, but as being intimately associated with each other. Baptism is a part of the Gospel, a part of the glad tidings. For that reason the apostles can say that we are begotten again by the Word, especially in places where they according to the context are not interested in separating or speaking individually of the parts employed by the Gospel of Christ. On the other hand, wherever according to the context they wish to give expression to the peculiar nature and effect of Baptism, there they say that Christ has joined the saving and regenerating work of the Spirit to the washing of Baptism. (See the section above concerning *The Baptismal Gift of Salvation.)*

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Before I leave this section, I shall try to illustrate the relation between Baptism and the Word by means of a figure from the realm of mechanics.

The wire is put into our house from the electric

power station. As soon as the wire is installed and the power is turned on, it is only a question as to whether the contacts are in order in the house; if so, the power quietly does all its work, gives light and heat, cooks, fries, and bakes, washes, dries, and irons.

If the contacts are destroyed in one way or another, the power ceases to work at once. It becomes cold and dark, and all machines stand still. But the wire leading into the house is exactly the same as before. And the power from the station is on. Now in order to make the repairs the station does not run a new wire into the house. The bad contact is simply repaired, and the power takes its usual course into the house and does exactly the same work as before: gives light and heat, cooks, etc.

The figure is commonplace, but let me apply it nevertheless.

In the hour of Baptism God laid the wire into the little child's soul. From that moment "the power is on." It accomplishes in the child all that the child has "contacts" enough to receive. The Word will see to it that there are more and more contacts in the child's soul to receive and to utilize all the power to which it has received access through Baptism.

Now when a baptized person falls away from God, nothing is changed in the "wiring." The power is on as before. It is only the contact in the soul which

has been destroyed. For that reason it has become dark and cold in there, and all the activity of the spiritual life has been stopped.

When a fallen person is awakened and brought to repentance, no change takes place in the wiring or in the amount of power. That is all exactly the same as before. The change which occurs at repentance takes place only within the person. The contact is put in order again. The living connection with Christ is re-established. There is light in the soul again immediately; heat likewise. And the activity of the new life is again exactly the same as before the fall.

V

Importance for Preaching

AFTER this inquiry into the relation between the gracious effect in man of the Word and of Baptism, we shall now, lastly, note briefly how important it is for our preaching and our pastoral care to present these thoughts.

AS TO THE AWAKENING

Now it is not difficult to see that these thoughts will easily grip the soul and cause it to reflect. As long as the God-life appears to the unsaved person as something distant and strange and practically unattainable, he will continue the more easily to live his sinful life in peace, undisturbed. If, on the other hand, he begins to see that he did possess life in God during the first and happiest years of his life, life in

God will no longer appear as something distant and strange. Memories of this childhood life with God will be called forth, memories which have a peculiarly attractive power because they stir the emotional life in the same way as in the happy days of childhood, and the sinner thereby receives the psychological prerequisites for feeling his worldly and God-distant life as something strange.

Furthermore, if the sinner can only be brought to see what he has once *possessed,* he will the more easily discover what he has *lost,* and feel how empty his life is without God. Holy longings will be awakened. The conscience will thereby gain a powerful ally deep down in the sinner's soul.

But above all, never will the enmity of the sinner's will toward God be more easily broken than when he sees the mercy of God in the grace of Baptism, namely, that the sinner can never change God's part in the covenant of Baptism. With all his sin he cannot alter God's transference of power begun in Baptism. With all his recalcitrance he cannot change the gracious will of God, by means of which he seeks and influences the sinner every moment, whether the sinner understands it or not and whether he desires it or not.

God's tender care and patient perseverance with the sinner in his frivolous and stubborn life will more certainly than anything else overcome the sinner and

make his life so bitter and burdensome that he will not be able to endure it any longer.

AS TO REPENTANCE

If the foregoing thoughts are of such importance for a person's awakening, we can be more brief in regard to repentance. They will, in the first place, *spur him on* to a choice, because they make his life in sin burdensome to him and call forth deep longings for the peace with God which he possessed during his childhood years.

In the second place, these thoughts will to a large degree *simplify* the choice for the sinner. And this is of tremendous importance at this time. Everything seems so impossible to him. How can he receive power to become a different man and break with his old life in sin? Here he learns that God will give him this power. But how can he secure it? In truth, the power wires have been in order since the moment of Baptism. He broke the contact by falling away from God. And now in repenting there is nothing that he can do but to give Jesus the chance to use his power within his helpless soul.

AS TO FAITH

This view of Baptism is none the less important for faith. The great difficulty for the honest, awakened soul is to believe the promises of God. He does *not*

doubt that the promises of God are true, but thinks that they can never apply to him. He always discovers something about himself which makes the promises inapplicable to him, even though they apply to all others. It cannot be denied that there is something *general* about the promises. They speak to all, and do not address themselves so clearly to the individual, at least so it seems to the troubled soul.

In this respect Baptism occupies a peculiar position. Baptism is *individualized grace*. Baptism is the most distinct expression of the love of God for the individual. The promises of God are never spoken to the individual alone, but to all at one time. Baptism, on the contrary is something that God does to the individual. When I was baptized, God performed the act upon me and it concerned no one else but me. In order to be of greater help to the sinner, God has met him not only with *words* spoken to him as an individual, but in an *act*. And this act is to stand at the beginning of our life and tell us more forcefully than any word that God has once for all granted us his grace. And he never takes it back. For that reason we retain it as long as we ourselves do not deny it access and shut ourselves out from it. If we have, through backsliding, shut ourselves out from it, we can receive it into our lives again the moment we ourselves will it so. For it only waits for us to give it access.

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Until his death in 1961, Dr. Ole Hallesby was one of Norway's leading theologians and occupied a position of unique importance in the land of his birth.

A man of deep convictions and evangelical fervor, he threw himself into the battle between liberalism and conservatism which raged in Norway during the 1920's and 1930's. He was a professor at the Independent Theological Seminary, Oslo, for 40 years and thus influenced hundreds of men who became pastors of the Church of Norway. During the Occupation of World War II, he became a figure of national stature in the resistance movement, working closely with the late Bishop Berggrav and other leaders in church and state.

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